[Theme music ‘Some Spooky Sh*t Is Going On Here’ by Theo Goodwin plays.]

INTRO

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The Underwood Collection, Episode Six: Honeycomb

(*Tape recorder clicks on. Tape static is heard continually throughout*)

ULYSSES
Statement of Silvia Conti, regarding her experiences with a beehive outside her family home. Original statement given 2nd October, 2016. Recording by UC Bamba, Head Curator of the Usher Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Statement Begins.

There was always a beehive outside my house. It was on the back porch, and my family didn’t use that area much, so we didn’t pay it much mind. As long as we gave the bees enough space, they were as content to leave us alone as well, just maintaining their small home of lacing catacombs.

I visited that house often while I was in college. Either way, it was only a short drive from campus and, as my father’s health deteriorated, it was

necessary for me to come visit every weekend, if not during the week as well. My studies didn't suffer much; as an undeclared major, the haphazard collection of classes I was required to take proved none too difficult.

We both liked to watch the bees that buzzed outside the window every summer. Though one or two might enter in through an open window, they were eager enough to head back outside with a little persuasion, rarely putting up a fight. At least, until the summer before my sophomore year of college. Or second year. Or whatever you want to call it over here. I'd spent the week camping with some friends and my… I guess, girlfriend? It doesn't matter. What matters is, that despite my father's protestations that he would be alright without me for a week, he might be old, but he could still take care of himself, you know how it is… when I came home, everything was still. A quiet hum led me into the living room, where I found my father.

I found him sat in his favorite armchair. At first, I thought he was just sleeping, or 'resting his eyes' as he would always say. I called out to him, but there was no response, just a gentle buzz.

It was hardly the strangest noise he'd made while snoring, though the fact that there were no interruptions for him to take breath did seem a bit strange, looking back on it. At the time, I just put down my things and turned on the light when he continued to not respond to me trying to wake him up. I called to him gently and then even started yelling when there was no sign of him waking.

The light revealed hundreds of insects crawling all over him. They looked, at first, like the bees we'd so often watched outside our window, those that had claimed the space under an outside lamp as their home. But these were different. The moment I turned on the light, the quiet buzzing

stopped. Everything was silent and I could swear that each little bug was watching me, reflected a thousand times in their mosaic eyes.

These were not the bees I knew.

I ran. I ran outside, where there were only mosquitoes and gnats in the night air to pester me. I called 911. I didn't know how to deal with this, but my father needed medical attention. I was sure to tell the contact over the line that there was swarm of bees all over him, and the responders should be sure to take the appropriate precautions.

He was already dead when the ambulance got there. I could only hope he'd been dead before the bees had crawled into his eyes and his mouth. Before they'd started to nest in his skin. Before they dug into his flesh to create another morbid home of hexagonal halls.

It was a while before I found myself strong enough to go back into that house. Though exterminators and fumigators had said the area was clear, that there were no bees or any other insect to be found, I couldn't bring myself to do it. When I finally did, a week after every last embedded bee was removed from my father's skin and the coroner allowed me to bury him, I hesitated by the light switch.

I turned it on. My father's armchair was gone, removed as part of the exterminating process. Nothing moved, and all was silent. I stepped over to the window where we would always watch the bees, and there was nothing.

I let out a breath I'd been holding for far too long and set my hands on the windowsill. Something soft brushed against my fingers, and I looked down.

There was a bee. And I could swear that it was looking at me, matching my gaze, daring me to brush it away. Its abdomen was almost… grey, not the usual yellow orange. But the eyes… I couldn't look away. I couldn't even try and find something to brush it off with, a newspaper or a magazine that could be used as a weapon if it attempted to swarm me as it had my father. I just stared at myself, reflected a hundred ways, in the eyes of the insect.

And then it flew away. It didn't sting me, I swear that. But the area where it sat got red and infected and now there's a little divot there. Doctors bandaged me up, gave me some antibiotics, and sent me on my way.

Came to London a week later. I have a cousin there, and she insisted I come stay with her before my next semester starts. Change of pace, get out of that house, you know. Whatever people think will help deal with the grief. I heard about you guys shortly after I came home, and my cousin called me, said I should give a statement, or whatever. Doesn't seem very paranormal to me. Just a weird, freak bee attack. Don't know. Maybe it'll help to get it all down on paper? I've already written down almost everything anyway, might as well wrap it up.

Despite everything, I still like bees. A new nest was built outside the back porch on my family home. I'm not sure if they're the same bees that killed my father, or a new set. But they still buzz around the window and I watch their dance, the hypnotic motion of their life.

I got an email from my college last night, asking if I'd made a decision on my major. They would need me to at least pick a particular area of study before I started up again. It came to me loud and clear as I shut off the living room light before I headed to bed. I'm going to study entomology. I can still hear their buzzing. It's quiet, but it hasn't been silent since that

one bee crawled up my arm. Just a faint hum, to remind me I'm not alone in the winding hexagonal catacombs of life.

Statement Ends.

Mm. Everyone thinks their statements aren't paranormal until they won't record digitally. Actually, that's a very good litmus test, but— I'm getting ahead of myself.

Without the recorded, I would be inclined to agree with Ms. Conti as to the supernatural relevance - *irrelevance,* rather - of this statement. From what I do know, it could be influenced by the entity known as Corruption. Hive. Either or.

However, Morgan's been doing some follow-up in the last few days, and found three other reported incidents of beehives suddenly changing their behavior to attack and kill those nearby. Excellently creepy, and a good reason why one shouldn't keep bees.

Oh! There's more, one second — a Mr. Gideon Lund, managed to survive the attack of killer bees, though he-
(As if reading aloud. Pages flicking in the background)
Lost his eyes and part of his tongue. Gross, but you know. It happens. When contacted for more information, he could barely say anything more than vague mumbles about the buzzing hum that wouldn't go away.

Ms. Conti answered our calls for a follow up, and has continued her studies at university. Pursuing a degree in… entomology. And she too is still hearing the buzz of the swarm.

I'm not sure what to do with this yet. Could be potentially valuable, but for now? I figure we can set it — Morgan? Hey, Morgan?

MORGAN

What?

ULYSSES

Did you bring something in here - Something sticky?

MORGAN

What? No, why?

ULYSSES

(Strained)

There are ants under my desk.

MORGAN

(With amusement.)

Under *your* desk. Did you leave food in here?

ULYSSES

I've never *brought* food in here. I don't even eat in the building.

MORGAN

Maybe… something of Frank's? It's a new office.

ULYSSES

...I guess

MORGAN

Is that all?

ULYSSES

Eh..Can you open the drawer?

MORGAN

The drawer with the ants.

ULYSSES

No, Morgan, whichever one strikes your fancy, what do you think I'm talking about-

MORGAN

Look, there's no need to be a—

ULYSSES

(*Genuine.*)

Okay, okay- I'm sorry. Uh- Yes. That drawer.

MORGAN

Since you asked so nicely.

ULYSSES

Please.

MORGAN

Yeah, yeah.

[*Creaking.*]

MORGAN

Oh, God, okay, that's nasty, that— that is disgusting!

ULYSSES

Christ.

MORGAN

No kidding!

ULYSSES

Okay I'm getting Adriene.

MORGAN

I'm getting *out of here.*

ULYSSES

Yes. Good plan. Oh, uhm, and— end recording.

[Theme plays.]

OUTRO

The Underwood Collection is a podcast produced and distributed by the Pitch Library Creative Team. Find us on Twitter @PitchLibrary, on Tumblr at www.pitchlibrary.tumblr.com, or contact us by sending an email to usherfoundation@gmail.com. The Underwood Theme was written by Theodore Goodwin and the Underwood Logo was created by Mae B. Thank you for listening.

[Theme ends.]